

FINANCIAL REPORTING

Annual Reporting

The City will prepare annual financial statements as follows:

- In accordance with various requirements, the City will contract for an annual audit by a qualified independent certified public accountant. The City will strive for an unqualified auditor's opinion.
- The City will use generally accepted accounting principles in preparing its annual financial statements, and will strive to meet the requirements of the GFOA's Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting program.
- The City will issue audited financial statements within 180 days after year-end.

GENERAL REVENUE MANAGEMENT

Diversified and Stable Base

The City will seek to maintain a diversified and stable revenue base to reduce the effects of short-term fluctuations in any one revenue source.

Current Revenues for Current Uses

The City will fund current expenditures with current revenues, avoiding procedures that balance current budgets by postponing needed expenditures, accruing future revenues, or rolling over short-term debt.

Interfund Transfers and Loans

In order to achieve important public policy goals, the City has established various special revenue, capital project, debt service and enterprise funds to account for revenues whose use should be restricted to certain activities. Accordingly, each fund exists as a separate financing entity from other funds, with its own revenue sources, expenditures and fund equity.

Any transfers between funds for operating purposes are clearly set forth in the annual budget. These operating transfers, under which financial resources are transferred from one fund to another, are distinctly different from interfund borrowings, which are usually made for temporary cash flow reasons, and are not intended to result in a transfer of financial resources by the end of the fiscal year.

In summary, interfund transfers result in a change in fund equity; interfund borrowings do not, as the intent is to repay the loan in the near term.

USER FEE COST RECOVERY GOALS

Ongoing Review

Fees will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to ensure that they keep pace with changes in the service delivery costs as well as changes in methods or levels of service delivery. In instances where State or other regulations limit the level of fees charged for City services, the user fee cost recovery principles may not apply. The budget document will identify where fee levels have been limited and clearly identify the subsidy required due to user fee limitations.

User Fee Cost Recovery Levels

In setting user fees and cost recovery levels, the following factors will be considered:

- *Community-Wide Versus Special Benefit* – The level of user fee cost recovery should consider the *community-wide* versus *special service* nature of the program or activity. The use of general-purpose revenues is appropriate for community-wide services, while user fees are appropriate for services that are of special benefit to easily identified individuals or groups.
- *Service Recipient Versus Service Driver* – After considering community-wide versus special benefit of the service, the concept of *service recipient* versus *service driver* should also be considered. For example, it could be argued that the applicant is not the beneficiary of the City's development review efforts; the community is the primary beneficiary. However, the applicant is the *driver* of development review costs, and as such, cost recovery from the applicant is appropriate.
- *Effect of Pricing on the Demand for Services* – The level of cost recovery and related pricing of services can significantly affect the demand and subsequent level of services provided. At full cost recovery, this has the specific advantage of ensuring that the City is providing services for which there is genuinely a market that is not overly stimulated by artificially low prices. Conversely, high levels of cost recovery will negatively impact the delivery of services to lower income groups. This negative feature is especially pronounced, and works against public policy, if the services are specifically targeted to low income groups.
- *Feasibility of Collection and Recovery* – Although it may be determined that a high level of cost recovery may be appropriate for specific services, it may be impractical or too costly to establish a system to identify and charge the user. Accordingly, the feasibility of assessing and collecting charges should also be

considered in developing user fees, especially if significant program costs are intended to be financed from that source.

Factors Favoring Low Cost Recovery Levels

Very low cost recovery levels are appropriate under the following circumstances:

- There is *no* intended relationship between the amount paid and the benefit received.
- Collecting fees is not cost-effective or will significantly impact the efficient delivery of the service.
- There is *no* intent to cover the cost of the service. Examples may include park shelter and auditorium rental.
- The service is non-recurring, generally delivered on a “peak demand” or emergency basis, cannot reasonably be planned for on an individual basis, and is not readily available from a private sector source. Many public safety services fall into this category.
- Collecting fees would discourage compliance with regulatory requirements and adherence is primarily self-identified, and as such, failure to comply would not be readily detected by the City. Small-scale licenses and permits might fall into this category.

Factors Favoring High Cost Recovery Levels

The use of service charges as a major source of funding service levels is especially appropriate under the following circumstances:

- The service is similar to services provided through the private sector and private or other public sector alternatives could or do exist for the delivery of the service.
- For requested service that requires added costs, it is intended that there be a direct relationship between the amount paid and the level and cost of the service received. An example is higher fees for utility hook-up after normal working hours.
- The service is regulatory in nature and voluntary compliance is not expected to be the primary method of detecting failure to meet regulatory requirements. Building permit, plan checks, and subdivision review fees for large projects would fall into this category.

General Concepts Regarding the Use of Service Charges

The following general concepts will be used in developing and implementing service charges:

- Revenues should not exceed the reasonable cost of providing the service.
- Cost recovery goals should be based on the total cost of delivering the service, including direct costs, departmental administration costs, and organization-wide support costs such as accounting, personnel, data processing, vehicle maintenance and insurance.
- The method of assessing and collecting fees should be as simple as possible in order to reduce the administrative cost of collection.
- Rate structures should be sensitive to the “market” for similar services as well as to smaller, infrequent users of the service.
- A unified approach should be used in determining cost recovery levels for various programs based on the factors discussed above.

Low Cost Recovery Services

Based on the criteria discussed above, the following types of services should have very low cost recovery goals. In selected circumstances, there may be specific activities within the broad scope of services provided that should have user charges associated with them. However, the primary source of funding for the operation as a whole should be general-purpose revenues, not user fees.

- Delivering public safety emergency response services such as police patrol services and fire suppression.
- Maintaining and developing public facilities that are provided on a uniform, community-wide basis such as streets, parks and general-purpose buildings.
- Providing social service programs and economic development activities.

Recreation Programs

The following cost recovery policies apply to the City’s recreation programs:

- Cost recovery for activities directed to adults should be relatively high.
- Cost recovery for activities directed to youth and seniors should be relatively low. Although ability to pay may not be a concern for all youth and senior participants, these are desired program activities, and the cost of determining need may be greater than the cost of providing a uniform service fee structure to all participants. Further, there is a community-wide benefit in encouraging high levels of participation in youth and senior recreation activities regardless of financial status.

- In those circumstances where services are similar to those provided in the private sector, cost recovery levels should be higher.

The City Parks and Recreation Department will work with the Parks and Recreation Commission to review recreation programs and establish specific cost recovery targets for broad program classifications. The FY 04/05 budget reflected the first step in this process as the Recreation Administration Program expenditures were reduced by allocation directly to recreation programs.

Planning Programs

The following cost recovery policies apply to the Current Planning programs:

- Services provided under this category include:
 1. Planning (planned development permits, tentative tract and parcel maps, rezonings, general plan amendments, variances, use permits).
 2. Building and safety (building permits, structural plan checks, inspections, rental inspections).
 3. Engineering (public improvement plan checks, inspections, subdivision requirements, encroachments).
- Cost recovery for these services should generally be very high. In most instances, the City's cost recovery goal should be 100%. Exceptions to this standard include Long Range planning services, as this function is clearly intended to serve the broader community.

Comparability With Other Communities

In setting user fees, the City will consider fees charged by other agencies in accordance with the following criteria:

- Surveying other comparable communities provides useful background information in setting fees:
 1. They reflect the market for these fees and can assess where the City compares.
- If prudently analyzed, they can serve as a benchmark for how cost-effectively the City provides its services.
- However, fee surveys should never be the sole or primary criteria in setting City fees as there are many factors that affect how and why other communities have set their fees at their levels. For example:
 1. What level of cost recovery is their fee intended to achieve compared with our cost recovery objectives?
 2. What costs have been considered in computing the fees?
 3. When was the last time that their fees were comprehensively evaluated?
 4. What level of service do they provide compared with our service or performance standards?
 5. Is their rate structure significantly different than ours and what is it intended to achieve?

These can be very difficult questions to address in fairly evaluating fees among different communities. As such, the comparability of our fees to other communities should be one factor among many that is considered in setting City fees.

ENTERPRISE FUND FEES AND RATES

Water, Sewer, Electric, Resource Recovery

The City will set fees and rates at levels which fully cover the total direct and indirect costs ---including operations, capital outlay, capital improvements, and debt service--- of the following enterprise programs: water, sewer, electric, and resource recovery. For major City utilities including water, sewer, and electric, the City will model five years of projected revenues and expenses including capital improvements. These projections will be used to identify and notify the City Council of the timing and level of possible rate changes.

Homewood Golf

Golf program fees should fully cover direct operating costs. Because of the nine-hole nature of the golf course with its focus on youth and seniors, subsidies from other City funds (Local Option Tax, General, Hotel/Motel Tax) to finance capital improvements will be presented to the City Council as part of the financial planning process.

CyRide Transit

Costs for operating the CyRide transit system will be shared based on the agreement among the City of Ames, Iowa State University, and the Iowa State University Government Student Body. The City support of CyRide will be limited to the transit property tax rate.

Ice Arena

The Ames/ISU Ice Arena fees and rates are set to fully cover direct operating costs. Major capital improvement costs will be funded by the City of Ames and Iowa State University.

Storm Sewer Utility

The storm sewer utility rates are intended to fund operating costs of the Storm Sewer Utility. Major capital improvements will be funded by other funding sources including general obligation bonds.

Payment In-Lieu of Taxes

In accordance with long-standing practices, the City will treat the Electric Utility in the same manner as if it were privately owned and operated. In addition to setting rates at levels necessary to fully cover the cost of providing electric service, this means assessing reasonable property tax in-lieu of fees.

- For the Electric Utility, property tax in-lieu fees are established under the same methodology used in assessing property tax for the City of Ames.

Enterprise Fund Debt Service – The City will set enterprise fund rates at levels needed to fully cover debt service requirements as well as operations, maintenance, administration and capital improvement costs. The ability to afford new debt for enterprise operations will be evaluated as an integral part of the City's rate review and setting process.

GRANT FUNDING POLICY

The City will actively seek grant funding to fund both operating and capital expenditures. Prior to acceptance of grant funding, an evaluation of the grant must determine the following:

- The grant purpose is compatible with City program objectives.
- The benefits provided by the grant exceed the cost of administration.
- The grant does not commit the City to long-term tax funded expenditures after the completion of the grant period. The City will evaluate the cost and funding source to determine whether to continue the service when the grant period ends. The decision to continue to fund or drop will be made prior to accepting the grant. Alternatively, the City could choose to continue the service with other funding.

REVENUE DISTRIBUTION

The Council recognizes that generally accepted accounting principles for state and local governments discourage the earmarking of General Fund revenues, and accordingly, the practice of designating General Fund revenues for specific programs should be minimized in the City's management of its fiscal affairs. Approval of the following revenue distribution policies does not prevent the City Council from directing General Fund resources to other functions and programs as necessary.

Road Use Tax Revenue

All Road Use Tax revenues (which are restricted by the State for street-related purposes) will be recorded in the Road Use Tax fund and reports will be provided to the State of Iowa per Code of Iowa requirements. The City will utilize this fund primarily for eligible operations and maintenance activities; the available funds may be utilized for eligible capital improvement funding.

The City maintains several other special revenue funds. The policy for revenue allocation for these funds will be included in the City Fund Policy Document.

INVESTMENTS

Responsibility

Investments and cash management are the responsibility of the City Treasurer or designee.

Investment Objectives

The City's primary investment objective is to achieve a reasonable rate of return while minimizing the potential for capital losses arising from market changes or issuer default.

Accordingly, the following factors will be considered in priority order in determining individual investment placements:

- Safety
- Liquidity
- Yield

A formal investment policy has been adopted by the City Council; this policy requires regular reporting by the City Treasurer that demonstrates compliance with the policy.